



# Consumer Guide

## Advanced Communications Access for Individuals with Disabilities

FCC rules require advanced communications services and equipment used for ACS to be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, unless doing so is not achievable with reasonable effort or expense. These FCC rules apply to ACS and equipment used for ACS that have been introduced into the marketplace or upgraded since October 8, 2013.

### What services and equipment need to be accessible?

ACS includes:

- Electronic messaging service, such as text messaging, instant messaging, or e-mail
- Internet voice chat service, such as using your computer to talk to a friend
- Interoperable video conferencing services

Equipment used for ACS includes computers, laptops, tablets, and mobile phones.

### What must equipment manufacturers and service providers do?

- Equipment manufacturers must ensure that the hardware and the software components they provide – such as the operating system, applications, and Internet browser – that are used for ACS are accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- Service providers must ensure that the ACS they provide, including the underlying components of their ACS, such as the hardware or software applications they provide, are accessible to individuals with disabilities.
- Equipment manufacturers and service providers may build accessibility into their products and services or rely on accessibility solutions provided by other companies that are not built into their products and services. An accessibility solution provided by another company might be, for example, an application or software that simplifies the display of a smartphone to enable an individual with a cognitive disability to send and receive e-mail and text messages. When accessibility solutions are provided by other companies, they must be available to consumers at a nominal cost (a cost small enough that it is not a factor in the consumer's decision to purchase the equipment or service).
- When accessibility is not achievable, equipment manufacturers and service providers must make their products and services compatible with devices or specialized equipment (such as refreshable Braille displays, visual signaling devices, and magnifiers) commonly used by individuals with disabilities to achieve accessibility, unless such compatibility is not achievable.
- However, every feature and function of every device or service does not need to be accessible for every disability. Instead, equipment manufacturers and service providers may offer products and services with varied functions, features, and prices that are accessible to the full range of consumers with varying types of disabilities.



## **Are there accessibility requirements for Internet browsers used for ACS?**

Yes. Internet browsers installed by manufacturers on equipment used for ACS, such as equipment used for web-based e-mail, must be accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities, unless doing so is not achievable. This means that individuals with disabilities must be able to access the functions of an Internet browser – for example, typing a web address in the address bar; identifying and activating the home, back, forward, refresh, reload, and stop buttons; viewing status information; and activating zooming or other features. ACS providers have this same obligation if they provide or require the installation and use of an Internet browser as a component of their ACS.

## **What does it mean to be “accessible” and “usable”?**

To be *accessible*, individuals with varying abilities must be able to locate, identify, and operate the input, control, and mechanical functions of a product or service, and be able to access the output or display of all information necessary to operate and use the product or service.

To be *usable*, individuals with disabilities must be able to learn about and operate the product or service's features, and must be able to access information and documentation for the product or service, including instructions and user guides. In addition, companies must provide access to support services, such as technical support hotlines and databases, call centers, service centers, repair services, and billing services.

## **What are the exceptions to these accessibility rules?**

- These FCC rules do not apply to ACS, or equipment used for ACS, that is customized for the unique needs of a particular business and not offered directly to the public.
- The FCC may waive these rules for equipment and services that include ACS, but are designed primarily for other purposes.

## **What can you do if you are concerned about the accessibility of an advanced communications product or service?**

You may first want to contact the equipment manufacturer or service provider to let them know about your accessibility concerns. You can [find company contact information on the FCC's website](#), by sending an e-mail to [dro@fcc.gov](mailto:dro@fcc.gov), or by calling 202-418-2517 (voice), 888-835-5322 (TTY), or 844-432-2275 (videophone).

Whether or not you decide to first contact a company, you can request assistance from the FCC's Disability Rights Office (DRO) to resolve an accessibility problem by submitting a “request for dispute assistance.” DRO must work with you and the company for at least 30 days to try to resolve the accessibility problem before you can file an informal complaint with the FCC.

The best way to file a request for dispute assistance is through [the FCC's online Consumer Complaint Center](#). This form requests all of the information that DRO will need to assist you. You may also request dispute assistance by sending an e-mail to [dro@fcc.gov](mailto:dro@fcc.gov), a fax to 202-418-0037, or a letter to:

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau  
Disability Rights Office  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554



Your request for dispute assistance should include the following:

- Your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address
- If communication by telephone or e-mail is not accessible to you, your preferred method of communication
- The name of the manufacturer or service provider
- The type of device, model number, and any software involved
- When you purchased, acquired, or used (or tried to purchase, acquire, or use) the service or equipment
- When you became aware of the accessibility problem
- How or why the service or equipment is not accessible to or usable by you
- If you contacted the company about your accessibility problem, how the company responded
- What you want the company to do to resolve your accessibility problem
- Any other information or documentation you think may help describe or resolve your accessibility problem

Your request for dispute assistance will be assigned a case number. If your accessibility problem is not resolved in 30 days, you will have two choices:

- Request an additional 30 days for DRO to work with you and the company to try to resolve your accessibility problem
- File an informal complaint about the accessibility problem with the FCC's Enforcement Bureau.

To request an additional 30 days or file an informal complaint, contact DRO at 202-418-2517 (voice), 888-835-5322 (TTY), or 844-432-2275 (videophone), by e-mail to [dro@fcc.gov](mailto:dro@fcc.gov), by fax to 202-418-0037, or by mail to the address above. You will need to provide your last name, zip code, and your case number. If you take no action for 60 days after the 30-day time period ends, your case will be closed.

### **For more information**

For more information about FCC programs to promote access for people with disabilities, visit the FCC's [Disability Rights Office website](#).

### **Consumer Help Center**

For more information on consumer issues, visit the FCC's Consumer Help Center at [www.fcc.gov/consumers](http://www.fcc.gov/consumers).

### **Accessible formats**

To request this article in an accessible format - braille, large print, Word or text document or audio - write or call us at the address or phone number at the bottom of the page, or send an email to [fcc504@fcc.gov](mailto:fcc504@fcc.gov).

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